Helping communities succeed in CBNRM: Roles and functions of a training institute

Introduction

ADMADE represents a national commitment to building community capacity to manage natural resources, to generate income from this management, and to use this income to support rural development. It relies on democratically elected leadership working jointly and respectfully with traditional leadership to carry out these responsibilities. It fuses partnerships to improve working relationships between Government, private sector and the community. ADMADE is a holistic approach to maintaining a balance between development and conservation and offers a cost-effective way to protect large ecological landscapes including both national parks and national forests. But most of all it is about rural people learning to make a better future for themselves by carefully using and conserving their natural resources. Making all this happen requires skills, skills that specifically promote civic responsibilities for improving living standards while up-holding high standards for natural resource management. The success of ADMADE, therefore, hinges very much on how effectively these skills are taught as well as how appropriate they are for achieving these results.

How best to deliver and support this training is the subject of this paper. ADMADE is aptly qualified in offering answers and insights into this question because of its considerable years of experience in developing its own training institute for this national service. This experience also provides an important opportunity and rationale to intensify this training commitment as the ADMADE program expands its scope and geographic influence. Key lessons that have been learned from this experience are presented in this paper to help guide the ADMADE program in this commitment.

Background on ADMADE's training institute

The African College for Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) at Nyamaluma provides skills training to community leaders implementing ADMADE and conducts year-round monitoring and research on ADMADE results. It has been in existence for 10 years and currently matriculates about 700 community residents annually. The college provides 15 accredited courses that cover a range of skills considered critical to implementing ADMADE and supports a staff with expertise in extension training to help reinforce the use of these skills.

The monitoring and evaluation work done by the College helps ADMADE stakeholders identify program strengths and weaknesses and make structural adjustments to the program itself. These changes represent a significant change toward building more democratic community institutions for managing and benefiting from natural resources. They also represent important advancements in diversifying income generation, providing improved methodologies for resource management, and increasing opportunities for community partnerships with the private sector.

Adaptive management has been a key feature in much of ADMADE's on-going development. This approach relies on programmatic flexibility to innovate and test novel methods as well as a willingness to accept mistakes as part of the learning process when innovations fail. The College has taken a leadership role in developing this approach, which has helped innovate new methodologies that can support program needs. It has also provided ADMADE with a reliable mechanism for introducing these methodologies to local leaders and practitioners of the ADMADE process.
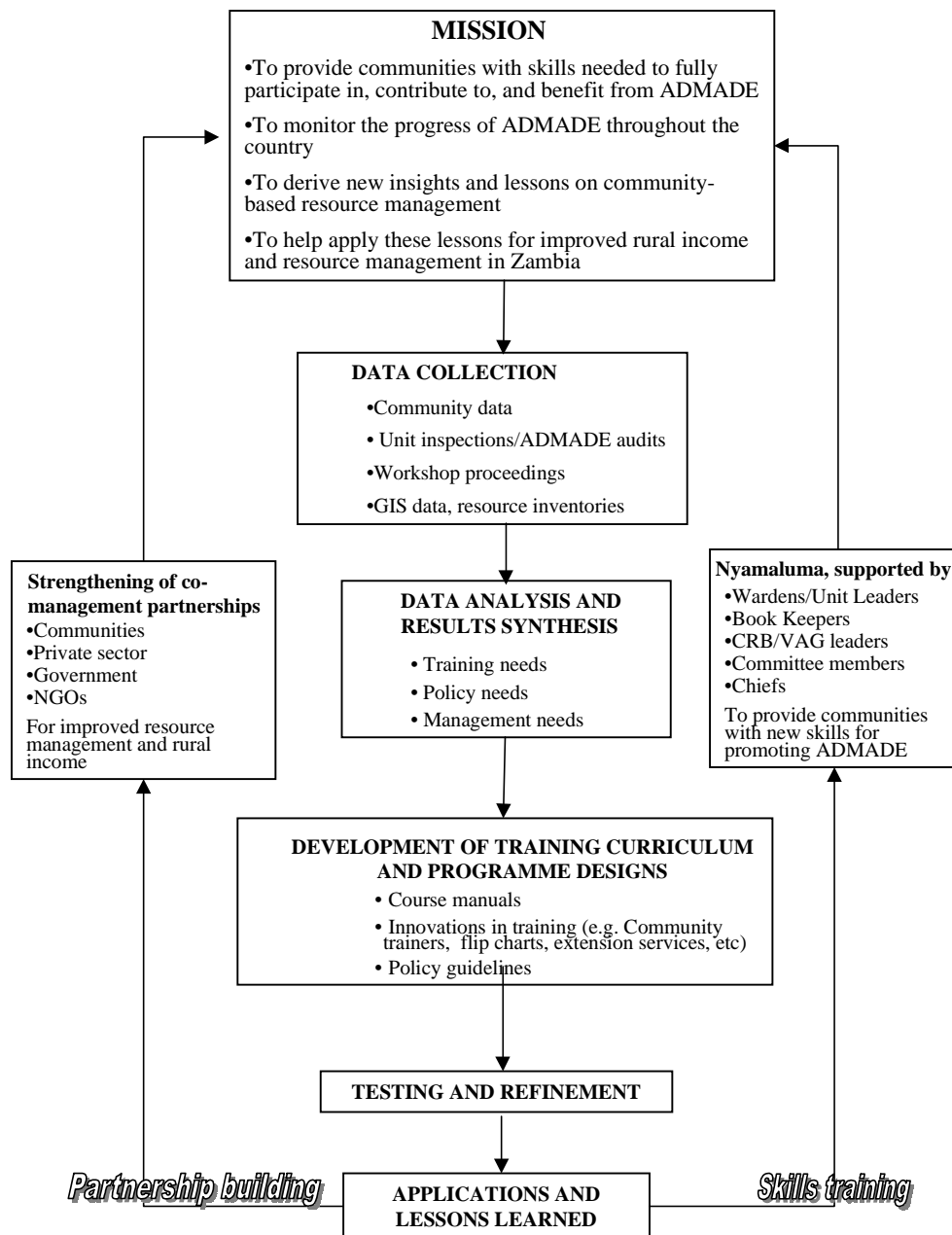
Institutional lessons for supporting CBNRM training

Over this 10-year experience the College has achieved a set of characteristics that define how the institute is structured and functions to support CBNRM training of the ADMADE program. These characteristics are listed below with corresponding recommendations considered helpful to most other CBNRM programs:

a. College has the mandate to devote staff and resources exclusively to ADMADE training support. This creates a core of professional CBNRM practitioners to more effectively address a constantly changing set of needs and problems affecting CBNRM performance.
b. Staffing consists of an appropriate mix of administration, service providers and technical staff to integrate efforts in supporting training needs. This enables the organization to respond effectively with well-guided and cost-effective training interventions.
c. College has developed a close, continuous contact with communities to identify training needs and changing priorities. This ensures training efforts are responding to community needs by making regular visits to communities and evaluating how well skills are being learned and applied.
d. Staff are culturally attuned to community values and traditions. Training staff who have a personal background in village life are often better able to communicate CBNRM concepts and be credible with community audiences.
e. Curriculum modules are designed to enhance multiplier effects of training trainers. Well-developed training modules supported by PRA techniques are key factors that enhance the multiplier effect of training trainers.
f. Training is cost-effective and requires contributions from the communities themselves. This is fundamental for an institute to survive funding cycles of donor support and to ultimately be donor independent.
g. College trains at all levels toward improved partnership-building among the key stakeholders. This is fundamental for building partnerships and improved co-management relationships at both the local and national level.
h. Technical staff track ADMADE performance to study cause and effect relationships. Research is fundamental to adapting training curricula to community needs. Systematic monitoring of CBNRM performance should be an integral part of a training institute's activities.
i. Technical staff disseminates ADMADE lessons in a formalized way to impact on new policies and improved administration of the program. Research results are disseminated to key practitioners and decision-makers in the CBNRM program. This also promotes the institute as an advisory arm of Government on CBNRM achievements and policy needs.

ADMADE Lessons-learned Paper   Page 2 of 8
African College for CBNRM, Box 82, Mfuwe, Zambia
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j. Training curricula, course content and CBNRM methodologies are guided from research and monitoring results. The training institute should have the capacity to respond rapidly and accurately to the changing needs of CBNRM.
k. College maintains close links with other organizations and institutions to keep informed on new technologies and research results for advancing CBNRM skills. It is important for an institute to be well networked with other organizations for advancing new technologies and methodologies to the CBNRM process.

These characteristics portray a need to fuse training and learning into a form of synergism that can build a dynamic process for CBNRM training. Zambia's efforts in this regard have become institutionalized through the African College for CBNRM and are summarized in the diagram below:

MISSION

- To provide communities with skills needed to fully participate in, contribute to, and benefit from ADMADE
- To monitor the progress of ADMADE throughout the country
- To derive new insights and lessons on community-based resource management
- To help apply these lessons for improved rural income and resource management in Zambia

DATA COLLECTION

- Community data
- Unit inspections/ADMADE audits
- Workshop proceedings
- GIS data, resource inventories

Strengthening of co-management partnerships
- Communities
- Private sector
- Government
- NGOs

For improved resource management and rural income

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS SYNTHESIS

- Training needs
- Policy needs
- Management needs

Nyamaluma, supported by
- Wardens/Unit Leaders
- Book Keepers
- CRB/VAG leaders
- Committee members
- Chiefs

To provide communities with new skills for promoting ADMADE

DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINING CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMME DESIGNS

- Course manuals
- Innovations in training (e.g. Community trainers, flip charts, extension services, etc)
- Policy guidelines

TESTING AND REFINEMENT

Partnership building

APPLICATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Skills training

ADMADE Lessons-learned Paper   Page 3 of 8
African College for CBNRM, Box 82, Mfuwe, Zambia
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Regionalizing a national institute: a lesson for institutional growth

One of the difficulties in coordinating and directing CBNRM training from a national institute is the logistical problem of supporting communities with training and extension services in all parts of the country. The African College for CBNRM has encountered this problem, and in response, has adopted an approach that broadens its geographic base while maintaining its institutional strengths of CBNRM expertise for supporting communities with training needs. The key lesson in achieving this balance is to maintain a strong "hub" of technical stewardship for monitoring and pilot testing CBNRM methodologies while transferring CBNRM training skills through extension services directed from regional "outposts". There are a number of reasons for advocating this approach:

1. CBNRM training needs repetitive visits to a community to evaluate how well community leaders are applying their skills, and if necessary, to provide additional training to improve their capacity. Qualified instructors need to be located within the region, at least for an extended period. Otherwise, frequent long-distance trips to these communities will make the training costly and impractical.
2. CBNRM skills that emphasize community participation are not easily taught in a classroom. By making frequent visits to a community, an outpost instructor will more likely be able to analyze possible problems or mistakes a CBNRM leader is making and how to counsel his/her skills.
3. Outposts will likely lower the costs of monitoring ADMADE results and allow more in-depth assessments and surveys to be undertaken.
4. Communication between the College and regional outposts by e-mail would enable training materials and correspondence as well as monitoring results to be coordinated by the College.
5. Outposts and communities will have access to the same level of technical expertise as can be provided directly from the college.

For the outpost model to be effective, several requirements are needed. First, the instructors stationed there should be fully qualified to train all of the appropriate training modules used by the college. The African College for CBNRM provides a three-month training course to certify such a person is qualified before posting. It is almost imperative the person have some prior experience working with an NGO organization in rural development and have PRA skills. Two, the person should originate from the region he/she will be assigned and be familiar with the local languages and customs. Three, the outpost needs to be staffed by at least two instructors to provide complimentary skills for their outreach services. This will also reduce risks of their services being interrupted should one fall sick or be temporarily out of the area. Four, their area of coverage should extend up to about a 100 km radius allowing the team to be responsible for outreach training in at least two ADMADE areas.

Trade-offs between classroom training and on-site extension support

Follow-up review of local leaders who participated in formal courses at the College in recent years have revealed that a significant proportion do not fully use the skills they were taught, nor do they explain what skills they acquired when they returned to their communities. Yet, when questioned about their understanding of the course material, most if not all of the subject

ADMADE Lessons-learned Paper   Page 4 of 8
African College for CBNRM, Box 82, Mfuwe, Zambia
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matter was understood. This perplexing situation has led CBNRM researchers at the College to conclude the following:

1) participants were not given enough training in facilitation skills to present information effectively to the community
2) participants do not want to be held accountable for their work and thus do not share information with the community
3) participants are jealous of sharing knowledge with others.

When members of the communities were explained what roles and responsibilities their elected ADMADE leaders are required to perform, community members soon began pressuring their leaders for results, which has led to improved ADMADE performance in most cases. To provide this transparency of procedures and methods about how ADMADE works, an external facilitator was required to come into the community and facilitate public meetings about the roles of their elected leaders.

One of the serious implications of this problem is that leaders generally do not consult with their community when consensus is desirable or when information about ADMADE needs to be shared. As a result, any sense of ownership for ADMADE by the general community is weakened if not lost through lack of a participatory approach. This is in strong contradiction to what is taught at the College.

These results suggest that while formal, more structured courses at the College may be appropriate or desirable for certain subjects, there must be a complimentary effort to increase public awareness about the basics of what these courses contain. The College now commits about 70% of its staff training time visiting communities as extension agents. The primary purpose for these visits is to have training practicals with local leaders while helping community members understand their own rights and responsibilities as a way of maintaining higher standards of leadership for implementing ADMADE.

Local language documentation of ADMADE guidelines

Much of the training manuals developed and published by the College is in English and though copies are provided freely to all participants of the different courses offered at the College, few are circulated in the community. As a result, written CBNRM knowledge remains mostly with the people who take the courses. The College is now undertaking translations of key ADMADE documents that provide guidelines and information about the program and the roles and responsibilities for those people paid or elected to serve the interests of the community.

Of the more recently published documents in local language, the Community ADMADE Constitution seems to have the greatest appeal and need. To a large extent, community leadership has been traditionally based on ad hoc decisions by people of traditional authority. In contrast, the ADMADE constitution lays out the rules and standards of elected leadership very clearly. With written copies in local language, community residents can now evaluate their leaders, and as a result, elected leaders become more concerned to please their constituents in terms of what is expected of them by the constitution to remain elected.

ADMADE Lessons-learned Paper   Page 5 of 8
African College for CBNRM, Box 82, Mfuwe, Zambia
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The lesson for CBNRM training is that without social pressure from the public to demand good leadership vis-a-vis the skills that were taught to local leaders, CBNRM performance will be compromised.

Developing a culture for using maps, collecting data and making technical decisions

While it is recognized that democratic and transparent leadership is the foundation for a successful ADMADE program, there is also recognition that technical decisions have be made when managing large land areas for both community needs and resource management needs. This is perhaps the ultimate challenge for a CBNRM training institute. Not only do these needs often conflict, requiring careful analysis of ways to best mitigate the conflict, each in their own right can also be complex and contentious.

The African College for CBNRM has had a privileged opportunity of developing a range of data needs in close consultation with community leaders for both resource management and community development and to help local leaders acquire the skills to use these data. Much of this work started with the outgrowth of village scouts to collect appropriate information on natural resources and their use. This later expanded to include financial management and accounting information and more recently indicators of community participation and compliance to good leadership and project management.

A number of very useful insights have emerged from this work and suggest that while information-related skills may be among the most difficult to teach, they are by far the most necessary for building self-reliance and accountability in administering CBNRM. Some of the key lessons for guiding and facilitating the use of these skills through the efforts of a training institute are as follows:

1. The institute itself should have a strong technical capacity in managing data and using the same data as it expects communities to use. In this way it can provide a more useful mentor role with its community counterparts.
2. The institute should have a long-term interest in the results of the same data being collected by the community. This will help sustain the institute's own motivation in working closely with community leaders to acquire information skills.
3. Designing information systems appropriate for communities requires pilot testing and a willingness to revise procedures.
4. An institute needs to have an effective way of maintaining regular, annual contact with the practitioners of these systems. In this way revisions and changes to methodologies can be easily adopted. This will also help maintain a uniform standard of data quality and analysis results.
5. Regular extension visits by institute trainers to communities are needed to review data, discuss results and assess how management decisions will be influenced.
6. Minimum educational standards for community practitioners should be as high as possible to facilitate transfer of skills. The institute should accept the responsibility of having a potentially long-term relationship with such people as a client-provider relationship. Without capable, educated people to train, the investment of time by the institute will be greatly compromised.

ADMADE Lessons-learned Paper   Page 6 of 8
African College for CBNRM, Box 82, Mfuwe, Zambia
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7. Technical manuals on information systems used by communities are essential. An institute should be prepared, however, to regularly update these manuals as methods improve or change.
8. Information that can be displayed or presented in graphical form has a much higher value for community dissemination. GIS-type information on community drawn maps is a good illustration for this approach, as are charts that show numeric descriptions, such as patterns of expenditures.
9. Trainers should develop at least several community practitioners for a given community to administer information systems. This will encourage group participation and counter-checking of all data results. Having more people involved in the process will also improve the flow of information to other members of the community and will ultimately enhance the way community decisions are formulated.

The ADMADE process has had almost eight years of investment in promoting community capacity to use information in an analytical way. While the process is long, it is an invaluable foundation for improving CBNRM decisions. Persistent pressure and encouragement from a training institute that is viewed as an ally to a community's development process can help instill a culture for information. Rural communities already have a culture for being social and gregarious in many forms of village life. A reasonable hypothesis for CBNRM might be that such a traditional culture could be an effective purveyor of information for improving general understanding about CBNRM in a community.

CBNRM auditing and a community AGM

A likely problem with many CBNRM programs, especially those without continuity of institutional support, is that the community lacks a well-defined vision or understanding of what their CBNRM is suppose to deliver, how it is to be delivered and who is responsible for delivering it. These issues may be reviewed by a training institute to selected members of the people, but more often than not, the community as a whole does not take stock of their own success in achieving these deliverables. ADMADE's experience has repeatedly shown that local leaders themselves tend to be far too confident and complacent over the level of results they are achieving and would like to give the impression their leadership is on track.

A very positive and important role for a training institute is to use its monitoring expertise to provide a comprehensive audit report for communities participating in CBNRM. Equally important as the report itself is to have it presented by a representative of the institute to a well-attended public meeting. There are several important objectives to this process:

1. Not to discredit local leaders, unless mistakes are deliberate or suggest real corruption, but to acknowledge their mistakes as a constructive way for improving results the following year. PRA approaches can be employed to evaluate the level of understanding by the community for what should have happened and ways to prevent the mistake from reoccurring.
2. Demonstrate transparency on use of community funds, quality of leadership, performance by village scouts, land use conflicts and other such matters critical to the success of the CBNRM program. Once the process has been demonstrated,

ADMADE Lessons-learned Paper   Page 7 of 8
African College for CBNRM, Box 82, Mfuwe, Zambia
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members of the community will expect the same level of transparency from their own leaders in the future.

3. Increase public pressure for improved governance. A public audit of leaders' performance if regularly scheduled should instill a stronger sense of responsibility and obligation of service to the community.

The ADMADE program specifically calls for such an audit report through an Annual General Meeting and is included in a proposed Statutory Instrument that will make such an AGM legally required by all Community Resource Boards. The facilitation of this process by an external facilitator initially is most important to provide a level of credibility and trust in the auditing results and to facilitate the training of how to conduct and present an ADMADE audit by the elected leaders themselves. An institute with a long-term commitment to skills development will be able to know when its services of being directly involved in the auditing process can be phased out. At this stage, the community would have achieved an important milestone for governing themselves and assuring their governance is accountable to the needs of the community and the natural resources.

<u>Conclusion: dedication and professionalism</u>

CBNRM is a process that has proven slower than most had predicted and certainly slower than the normal cycles of donor support for more conventional development projects. ADMADE's ten-year experience has shown how easy it is for CBNRM results to go off-course when local leadership is not accountable, despite repeated efforts to provide skills and formal training. It has also shown how critical it is to have the watchful eye of an institution dedicated to observing community processes, understanding why results happen as they do, and adjusting training approaches or program designs to attain more desirable results. The key ingredients for an institution to provide this level of service are dedication and professionalism. Lessons to improve CBNRM often come slowly, but not to expect lessons will bring certain failure to an evolving CBNRM program. The capacity to learn lessons therefore requires dedicated interest in achieving CBNRM success. Professional skills representing a number of interacting disciplines with qualified staff capable of providing them is also essential. Zambia's commitment to a national institute and its network of training outposts is a clear indication of this country's resolve to help cultivate such excellence for its ADMADE program.

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ADMADE Lessons-learned Paper
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Page 8 of 8